

CRABS FROM PURGATORY

May 8, 2000 (Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org) - When the Protestant Reformation took control of Geneva, Switzerland, in the first half of the sixteenth century, many of the frauds which had long been perpetrated by the Catholic priests were exposed.

At St. Gervais cathedral it was long believed, for example, that the bodies of three "saints"--St. Nazaire, St. Celsus, and St. Pantaleon--were interned beneath the high altar. Why, on Christmas Eve and other high religious occasions the saints could even be heard singing and talking! When the foundation stone was removed, though, the citizens found not singing saints but a mechanism similar to organ pipes, through which water was forced, making a hollow sound, "not unlike the voices of men singing or conversing in the bowels of the earth."

The actual brain of St. Peter was thought to lay on the high altar in the cathedral, but when it was examined it was found to be a piece of pumice-stone.

Another "holy relic" which was allegedly possessed by the Catholic authorities in Geneva was the arm of St. Anthony. It had long been kissed and worshipped by the superstitious populace, and its owners had profited financially. As it turns out, though, it was not an arm at all; it was part of a stag.

The most clever fraud of all, though, might have been the "crabs from purgatory." For many years the people have been awestruck by mysterious little flickering lights which appeared from time to time moving about the churchyard in the midst of the graves at night. The priests said these were souls from purgatory who had been allowed to revisit the world of the living in order to encourage their loved ones to give money for alms and masses. The priests would urge the people to "hasten with your alms, that your mothers, fathers, husbands, may not have to return to the torments from which they have just made their escape." Such a plea never failed to produce a golden harvest for the Catholic church. It turned out, though, that the lights were crabs from Lake Geneva with little bits of candles stuck to their backs! (These facts are from *The History of Protestantism* by J.A. Wylie, 1899, II, p. 273.)